

Red Ribbon Week Celebrated In Manhasset

Manhasset SCA and CASA recently collaborated to bring Red Ribbon Week, the nation's largest and oldest drug prevention campaign, to the Manhasset school community. The red ribbon is a symbol of the commitment to the education, understanding and prevention of substance abuse. This year's Red Ribbon Week Prevention Education Programs included Manhasset's elementary school students celebrating Character Matters for a Healthy & Drug Free Me and secondary students and parents learning about how today's drug trends affect any family in any community.



Dedicated SCA Red Ribbon Week Committee Cochairs Rachael Bilello and Monita Mendiratta from Shelter Rock and Kristen Kaping and Kerry Pasquale from Munsey Park, along with parent volunteers, adorned Munsey Park and Shelter Rock Schools' hallways with student take-home art projects and decorated school grounds with red ribbons. Students received Character Matters for a Healthy & Drug Free Me bracelets as a symbol of their commitment to making healthy choices.

Munsey Park and Shelter Rock Elementary Schools' kindergarten through second grade students participated in Push-in classroom lessons led by Amanda Gimondo and grades three through six students joined in assembly presentations featuring Kim Fanter Cross, MS School Counselor. Kindergarten through grade 2 students discovered how character matters across their friendships, classroom, home and neighborhood where students explored healthy choices and decision-making through age-appropriate books and classroom activities. Grades 3 through 6 students found out that what you say and do matters along with how you treat others and how you are treated matters. Students also learned what it means to be a positive role model and how youth their age are making a difference in other communities across the country. Cross also presented The Keys to Effective Parenting to elementary school parents in order to enhance Red Ribbon Week Programming.

CASA's Drug Trends & Young People presentation at Manhasset Secondary Schools was well-attended with over 250 parents and students gathering to listen to Linda Ventura, a Kings Park mother of three, who lost her son to a heroin overdose. Ventura poignantly told the story of her son Thomas, a teen with a great heart who was scouted in ninth grade for his athletic abilities as a lacrosse goalie. His experimenting with alcohol eventually led him to use other drugs including marijuana, prescription drugs and heroin. He died March 14, 2012 of a heroin overdose. He was only 21.

Reisa Berg, LMSW, from the



Long Island Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (LICADD), continued the discussion about Long Island's Opioid Epidemic as well as legal and illegal substances popular to teens today. Berg examined the reasons teens use drugs or alcohol: curiosity, peer pressure, relaxation, anxiety, social acceptance, depression, escape, energy and to lose inhibitions. She stressed to both parents and teens the importance of having healthy coping skills in order to navigate adolescence and life making healthy decisions. Healthy coping skills include exercise, communication (peers, professionals, family and supports), relaxation techniques (like meditation, quiet time, spiritual practice or activities of enjoyment), acceptance (does not mean likability), mindfulness as well

as self-expression/creative expression.

The program concluded with over 40 parents and residents participating in LICADD's Naloxone Administration Training. Naloxone is the antidote to an opioid overdose. The program also provided Chinese translation by New York National Guard Counterdrug Task Force Civil Operation Specialists Sgt. Haoyi You and Gabriel Manzueta. The National Guard provides CASA's Drug Free Communities Program Grant technical and evaluation assistance.

